



2014 GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATE CHARTER SCHOOLS QUESTIONNAIRE

INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

Georgia Charter Schools Association is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit membership organization for Georgia's charter school operators and petitioners. Our mission is to be an effective advocate, resource, and service provider for charter public schools in the state.

Gubernatorial candidates recognize Georgia Charter Schools Association may release my responses at any time to GCSA members and/or the general public.

Candidates understand Georgia Charter Schools Association, as a 501c3, does not endorse any candidate for political office.

Candidates recognize that by returning this questionnaire to GCSA, either electronically or by mail, conveys their individual opinions.

This questionnaire contains six questions that require full commentary response. It is the discretion of each candidate to determine the length of his or her answer. All questions must be answered for the questionnaire to be considered valid.

CANDIDATE'S NAME Governor Nathan Deal

PARTY AFFILIATION Republican

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SIGNATURE OF CANDIDATE OR CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR/MANAGER ON BEHALF OF CANDIDATE

DATE OF SIGNATURE _____

*If you have any questions about this survey, please do not hesitate to contact
Andrew Lewis at 404-835-8902 or alewis@gacharters.org.*

PLEASE SIGN & RETURN COMPLETED FORM

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OVERALL VIEW ON PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

1. Please explain how you believe independent self-governing public charter schools play a role within public k-12 education in Georgia.

Innovation, flexibility and accountability are fundamental building blocks to driving student achievement in K-12 education, and charter schools are catalysts for improvement and reform within a system that has long been burdened by bureaucracy and inflexibility due to 'top-down' control.

Governor Nathan Deal is a champion of charter schools, having governed over passage of legislation, and ultimately a Constitutional Amendment, to establish the independent Georgia Charter School Commission in 2012. In addition, Governor Deal has prioritized funding for K-12 education during his Administration and has advanced policies that promote the importance of education in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) – curriculum which charter schools are uniquely capable of offering to students.

Charter schools are not only capable of avoiding bureaucratic hurdles that often stifle innovation in the classroom, but they are also excellent options that give Georgia's parents and students meaningful choices when it comes to public education. Competition, flexibility, innovation and accountability are tremendous forces that, when aligned, can yield impressive progress in achieving a common goal. Charter schools are prime examples where flexibility – in exchange for accountability – can yield positive results while eliminating bureaucratic 'red tape.'

2. President Obama and his predecessors, President Bush and President Clinton, all called for the expansion of public charter schools as part of their national education policy. Under their administrations, the number of public charter schools across the United States increased from 1,542 schools in 1999-2000 to 6,004 schools in 2013-2014. The number of students being served in these charters has increased through the same time period from 349,714 students to 2,280,627 students.

Do you support this bipartisan effort at the federal and state level? Why or why not?

Yes. Governor Deal has a proven track record in support of public charter schools in Georgia and will continue to support policies that give parents and students choices when deciding what school option best suits their individual needs. Already, with 110 charter schools and 107 schools within 14 charter systems established across our state, tremendous progress is being made. Not only are Georgia's charter schools geographically dispersed throughout the state, but they are being embraced on a bipartisan basis.

Developing Georgia's charter school infrastructure is a mission that Nathan Deal will continue to support during his second term as Governor.



ROLE OF THE STATE IN GEORGIA'S CHARTER PROCESS

Georgia law allows for local approval (local boards of education) and state approval (state charter schools commission) of public charter schools. The latter approval process, allowing the state to have the ability to authorize charter public schools, in addition to local boards of education, was a contentious issue for the Georgia General Assembly and for many voters in 2012.

In November 2012 voters passed Amendment 1, the Charter Schools Amendment, in a statewide referendum by a 58.6% margin with support coming from a diverse mix of geographic, demographic and cultural backgrounds.

3. Did you support or oppose the Charter Schools Amendment, allowing for a single purpose, statewide authorizer of charter schools? Why or why not?

Governor Nathan Deal championed the Charter Schools Amendment in 2012 by signing [HB 797](#) and continues to support efforts – both legislative and regulatory in nature – that remove barriers to the creation of high-performing, accountable charter school options for students across our state. Following its passage by the General Assembly in 2012, Governor Deal was an outspoken advocate in support of the requisite Constitutional Referendum that established the Charter School Commission that was ultimately approved on a bipartisan basis by 58.58%.

Since the passage of the constitutional amendment, local school systems are approving more charter petitions. Governor Deal appreciates the work of these systems to come together and reach consensus, and views this pathway to achieving charter school status as the preferable approach. However, challenges remain in many parts of our state, and the Charter School Commission offers communities across Georgia another avenue through which to achieve charter status.

Governor Deal understands that parent engagement and choice in their child's education is a fundamental ingredient for success. There is no place more 'local' than a child's own home; where a child chooses to attend public school is a topic best left for the kitchen table, not a conference table. To that end, Governor Deal will continue to support policies that empower students and their parents to decide what education options best suit their individual needs while ensuring all options are held accountable for producing positive results.

4. Two years removed, and in consideration of state charter school performance, what do the results of Amendment 1 mean to you with regards to the state's role in public k-12 education, specifically chartering?

Governor Deal was pleased by widespread bipartisan support of Amendment 1, garnering 58.58% approval when presented directly to voters across Georgia. Not only did the result of this vote prove that students and parents value school choice, but it also underscored their desire to drive reforms in public education that focus on innovation and accountability for producing outcomes. With added flexibility, charter designees in Georgia are demonstrating real improvements in academic performance, even among some of Georgia's most historically-underperforming communities.

Charters bring strong accountability to the public school infrastructure. If they do not achieve the results expected of them by the end of their five year contract, their contract will not be renewed, meaning the school will close.

INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

Charter schools allow for innovative education practices within public K-12 education. These innovative practices are meant to drive stronger results in student achievement.

In recent months, parents and educators in the Druid Hills community of DeKalb County attempted to work with DeKalb County Schools to convert the Druid Hills High School Cluster (the high school and all of its feeder schools) to a



"charter cluster." After many months of work, advocates for the cluster voted with a clear mandate (91% approval by voters), to send their charter cluster petition to the DeKalb County Board of Education for a vote. The DeKalb County Board of Education, in a 5-4 vote, denied allowing the Druid Hills Cluster to convert to charter status under the governance of one 501(c)3 nonprofit board.

5. Should conversion charters and charter clusters, like the Druid Hills Charter Cluster, be allowed some type of an appeals process with the State when denied by their local district? Please explain.

Cluster petitions should be afforded fair opportunity for review and consideration when applying to convert to charter status. Establishing a state-level charter cluster appeals process would require passage of legislation during session of the General Assembly. Governor Deal looks forward to working with stakeholders, including legislators, parents and GCSA to develop an equitable review and appeals process for charter cluster conversions that takes into account the needs and concerns of all parties.

6. States with the most successful and varied types of charter schools, such as Tennessee, Louisiana, New York, Colorado and others, have used various state resources to attract the best charter operators and leaders from across the nation while incubating new operators and leaders from their own state. How will you, if at all, go about attracting the top charter operators and leaders to Georgia while attempting to groom homegrown operators and leaders from within the state as well?

Attracting top-tier operators largely depends upon available funding. Recognizing the benefit that a strong education plays in developing a strong, work-ready Georgia, Governor Deal has allocated increased funding to K-12 education as part of every budget he has signed into law. This year, Governor Deal signed into law \$535 million in new K-12 funding, representing the largest increase in education funding in seven years. Over the course of his Administration, Governor Deal has increased funding for education by over \$900 million.

As Georgia's charter school infrastructure continues to develop, Governor Deal is closely following progress in other states to learn from their successes and incorporate best practices into policy here at home. In particular, the Governor is focused on attracting additional best-of-breed charter operators to parts of our state where the greatest need for academic improvement exists. Governor Deal will remain open to consideration of any needed funding or policy changes that will incentivize top-tier charter school operators to create new options for students and parents across Georgia, particularly those living within our most historically-underperforming communities.

Governor Deal recognizes that a high-quality education is the ticket to a good job, and a good job gives Georgia's families opportunities to provide for themselves and their families for decades to come. Charter schools play an integral role in producing well-equipped graduates ready for the workforce, or for the pursuit of higher education. To that end, Governor Deal looks forward to continuing to work with all stakeholders to advance the mission of Georgia's charter schools in producing excellent academic outcomes, choice and opportunities for all students across our state.